

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of sending an advertisement to a user operating a wireless communication device, comprising:
 - receiving first information about a location of the user;
 - searching a first database containing a plurality of location-specific advertisements;
 - selecting a first one of the plurality of location-specific advertisements that is associated with the location of the user; and
 - sending the first one of the plurality of location-specific advertisements to the wireless communication device in the form of a first TCP/IP (Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol) message over a communication network.
2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 - receiving second information about the identity of the user;
 - searching a second database containing a plurality of user-specific advertisements;
 - identifying a second one of the plurality of user-specific advertisements; and
 - sending the second one of the plurality of user-specific advertisements to the wireless communication device over the communication network without transmitting an indication of the identity of the user therewith.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein the second one of the plurality of user-specific advertisements is sent to the wireless communication device in the form of a second TCP/IP message.
4. The method of claim 2, wherein the second one of the plurality of user-specific advertisements is identified based on one or more criteria pre-selected by the user.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

- receiving second information about the identity of the user;
- accessing a second database containing a plurality of user-specific preferences;
- identifying one or more preferences in the second database that are associated with the user;
- selecting the first one of the plurality of location-specific advertisements based on the one or more preferences in the second database; and
- sending the first one of the plurality of location-specific advertisements in the form of the first TCP/IP message to the wireless communication device without transmitting an indication of the identity of the user therewith.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein receiving the second information about the identity of the user is accomplished by obtaining the second information for a fee.

7. The method of claim 5, wherein receiving the second information about the identity of the user is accomplished by soliciting the second information from the user when the user signs up for a service that provides one or more location-specific advertisements to the user.

8. The method of claim 5, wherein receiving the second information about the identity of the user is accomplished by extracting the second information from a message transmitted by the wireless communication device.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the first information about the location of the user includes second information about the identity of the user, and wherein the first one of the plurality of location-specific advertisements is sent to the wireless communication device without transmitting an indication of the identity of the user therewith.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein the first information about the location of the user excludes second information about the identity of the user.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein searching the first database includes:

- accessing the first database; and
- matching the location of the user received in the first information against each of a plurality of locations stored in the first database to determine which of the plurality of location-specific advertisements is associated with the location of the user.

12. The method of claim 1, wherein the first one of the plurality of location-specific advertisements is sent to the wireless communication device over the Internet.

13. A method of sending an advertisement over a communication network to a user operating a wireless communication device, comprising:

- receiving first information about a location of the user;
- receiving second information about the identity of the user;
- searching a database containing a plurality of location-specific advertisements;
- selecting one of the plurality of location-specific advertisements based on one or more criteria pre-selected by the user; and
- sending the one of the plurality of location-specific advertisements to the wireless communication device over the communication network without transmitting the identity of the user therewith.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein receiving the first information about the location of the user is accomplished by obtaining the first information from an information provider.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein the first information about the location of the user is obtained from the information provider for a fee.

16. The method of claim 13, wherein receiving the second information about the identity of the user includes receiving the second information from an information provider.

17. The method of claim 13, wherein selecting the one of the plurality of location-specific advertisements includes:

- receiving the one or more criteria from the user;
- storing the one or more criteria received from the user in the database; and
- consulting the one or more criteria while selecting the one of the plurality of location-specific advertisements from the database.

18. The method of claim 13, further comprising allowing the user to unblock over the Internet the transmission of the identity of the user.

19. The method of claim 13, further comprising disclosing the identity of the user to an emergency service provider when the user requests emergency help.

20. The method of claim 13, wherein the one of the plurality of location-specific advertisements is sent over the communication network in the form of a TCP/IP (Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol) message.